

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
 INTERVIEW WITH BRYANT GUMBEL ON NBC-TV PROGRAM, "TODAY"
 PENTAGON
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BRYANT GUMBEL: At the Pentagon this morning is Defense Secretary William Perry.

Mr. Secretary, good morning.

SEC. PERRY: Good morning, Bryant.

MR. GUMBEL: Ambassador William Swing, as we heard, is in Haiti. He still could have a meeting with General Cedras. How do you regard the possibility that Cedras and the other leaders might still step down voluntarily?

SEC. PERRY: I'm still hoping that they will step down and we can avoid the necessity of forcible entry of our troops into Haiti.

MR. GUMBEL: The troops are poised and ready. I don't expect you to tell me when they're going in. I will ask you, though, how long could they remain at the ready without losing their edge?

SEC. PERRY: I went down to visit a good many of our commanders and troops on Wednesday, went on board the Eisenhower and on board the Mt. Whitney, our command and control ship; talked with the troops, talked with the commanders there. They are already at a high state of readiness. They've exercised for this. The detailed plan has been put together for quite some time. I think they can hold that edge for some period of time, some number of days. But they are ready, and they're ready now.

MR. GUMBEL: Some are claiming that taking control of the island could be accomplished in the first 24 hours of the invasion. To your mind, is that realistic? Is that doable?

SEC. PERRY: The plan we have put together, Bryant, is the plan which uses overwhelming force. And there are two reasons for using overwhelming force. One is so that you can conduct the operation very

quickly, and the second is so you can minimize casualties; minimize casualties on both sides, I might add. So it would be over in a matter of -- the military aspect of this would be over in a matter of hours; at most a day or two.

MR. GUMBEL: The military aspect would be over in a matter of hours; at most a day or two. Would it still be a --

SEC. PERRY: That's not to say that our troops would be able to leave at that time --

MR. GUMBEL: I understand.

SEC. PERRY: -- because there's an important ongoing task of restoring order and establishing security in the island. That will take much longer.

MR. GUMBEL: Would tracking Cedras and other leaders, if they went into hiding, be a priority?

SEC. PERRY: No, it would not be. Our task, military task, is simply to separate the leadership from the military forces, neutralize the military force. We do not have any orders or directions to capture or to track down those leaders. If we do, if, in the course of our military operations we come across them, we will arrest them.

MR. GUMBEL: How do you view the possibility, Mr. Secretary, that the invasion might spark a civil war that would necessarily engage American troops?

SEC. PERRY: We have, as an important part of this plan, a follow-up security force and police force which will get very quickly established in a matter of days after the military operation. Their job would be precisely that, to restore order and to maintain control.

MR. GUMBEL: But there seems little question that U.S. troops would quickly overwhelm Haitian forces. But the invasion, if and when it's effected, might also stir the passions of civilians. Will any and all who oppose U.S. forces in Haiti, even if they're civilians, be viewed as hostile and subjected to fire as if they were military?

SEC. PERRY: The task of the U.S.

military force, if we go into this invasion, would be to neutralize the Haitian military and the armed resistance, not just their organized military, but they have a group of disorganized military called attaches. And it'll be important to subdue them, disarm them. There may be a civilian lack of control, riots of various sort, and that's what the police force is there to control. And so the police force needs to be brought up very quickly after the military force does its military task.

MR. GUMBEL: In the Grenada operation, 2700 troops were involved and 19 died. In Panama about 24,000 were involved and 23 died. For this operation, what estimates have you given the president of expected U.S. casualties?

SEC. PERRY: I don't want to quote a number, Bryant, but I will tell you that we have told the president in our own planning shows that an operation like this is not without risk. We anticipate casualties. We anticipate casualties on both sides. The use of overwhelming force is designed to minimize those casualties. That's why we're putting in such a strong and such an effective force.

MR. GUMBEL: Mr. Secretary, William Perry, thank you very much. Good luck, sir.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you, Bryant.
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